

**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) Device for the separation of plastic cards, especially chip cards, from a sheet or strip material, the device comprising:

at least two sets of with an upper and lower cutting tools each defining thea cutting outline, the upper and lower cutting tools of each set being which are designed to cut into a corresponding upper and lower side of the sheet or strip material, while retaining a residual cross-piece, wherein the two sets at least two upper and at least two lower of cutting tools are located assigned in each case next to each other and are operable to provided for the forcibly coupled simultaneously separateion of several plastic cards from the sheet or strip material in one cutting and separating operation.

2. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 1,

wherein, between an the upper and a lower cutting tools of each set, a fixing device for the positioning and holding of the sheet or strip material is provided at least during the cutting process.

3. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 2,

wherein the fixing device e onsists of in cl udes an upper and a lower guide frame element.

4. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 3,

wherein the guide frame elements of at least two adjacent cutting tools are linked to form a jointly movable guide frame element.

5. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 4,

wherein the guide frame is spring supported.

6. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 4,

wherein the guide frame is formed as a single component.

7. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 3,

wherein the cutting tools each have a wedge-shaped cutting blade defining the cutting outline and the guide frame element ~~assigned in each case has~~ a window, whereby and wherein the cutting blade is formed such that it can move into the assigned window.

8. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 7,

wherein the guide frame has at least two adjacent windows which are separated from each other by connecting struts.

9. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 8,

wherein the connecting struts of the guide frame are formed as replaceable round bars.

10. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 8,

wherein the connecting struts have a width of 2 to 5 times the thickness of the plastic cards.

11. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 1,

wherein the cutting tools have a cutting outline running round in a rectangle with a longer and a shorter side[,] and wherein the shorter sides of the adjacent cutting tools are aligned parallel to each other.

12. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 11,

wherein[.] between two adjacent wedge-shaped cutting blades[.] a groove is formed to incorporate the connecting strut during the cutting process.

13. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 12,

wherein the depth of groove is greater than the height of the connecting struts.

14. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 1,

wherein at least one lower and/or one associated upper cutting tool of each set is positioned on a base plate[,] and this wherein the base plate has at least one window positioned coaxially to the cutting outline of a cutting tool, whereby and wherein the opening surface of the windows corresponds at least to the surface covered by the cutting outline.

15. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 1 A device for the separation of a plastic card from a sheet or strip material, the device comprising:

upper and lower cutting tools defining a cutting outline, the upper and lower cutting tools being designed to cut into a corresponding upper and lower sides of the sheet or strip material, while retaining a residual cross-piece; and

with a pressure stamp that can plunge into the cutting outline for separating separate out the cut plastic cards from the sheet or strip material[.]

, wherein ventilation is provided for the air present or enclosed between the pressure stamp and the plastic card to limit and that this is formed such that a pressure difference between the pressure of the air present between the pressure stamp and the plastic card and the ambient pressure during the separation process and the ambient pressure is limited to a predetermined value.

16. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 15,

wherein the ventilation to limit the value of the pressure difference to the ambient pressure is formed such that any disruptive influence of the air present or enclosed between the pressure stamp and the plastic card during separation of the plastic card is kept to a minimum.

17. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 15,

wherein the ventilation is formed such that any suction effect from the pressure stamp on moving back after the separation of the plastic card is kept to a minimum.

18. (Currently Amended) Device according to Claim 15,  
wherein the distance between the pressure stamp and a wedge-shaped cutting blade during the  
cutting processes is less than the thickness of the plastic cards; and preferably less than 0.3 mm.

19. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 15,  
wherein the pressure stamp has a front surface that is in contact with the plastic card during  
separation and is provided with at least one bored hole open to the front surface to provide  
ventilation.

20. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 19,  
wherein the bored holes in the front surface are symmetrical to the longitudinal and transverse  
axes of the front surface running parallel to the side edges of the front surface.

21. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 15,  
wherein the ventilation is provided by a three-dimensional contouring at the front surface.

22. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 21,  
wherein raised corner areas of the front surface span jointly a conceived area, and side edges in  
between are set back in relation to the conceived area.

23. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 15,  
wherein the ventilation has at least one groove on the front surface.

24. (Previously Presented) Device according to Claim 15,  
wherein the ventilation includes air ducts at the cutting tools.

25. (Currently Amended) Method for the separation of plastic cards from strips or sheets  
using a device comprising at least two sets of upper and lower cutting tools each defining a

cutting outline, wherein the two sets of cutting tools are located next to each other, the method comprising: with the device from Claim 1 with the following stages:

- fixing the sheet or strip material,
- cutting the upper and lower side of the sheet or strip material with the assigned upper and lower cutting tools of each set defining the cutting outlines, while retaining a residual cross-piece;
- pressing out of the plastic cards from the sheet or strip material,  
wherein, as a result of the cutting and pressing steps, at least two plastic cards are separated forcibly coupled out from the sheet or strip material at the same time.

26. (Previously Presented) Method according to Claim 25,

wherein at least two plastic cards are fixed forcibly coupled, cut forcibly coupled and then pressed out at the same time.

27. (Currently Amended) Method according to Claim 25,

wherein, when the plastic cards are being pressed out, ventilation is carried out which limits any effect of the air movement created by the a pressure stamp of the device on the pressing out and the direction of ejection of the plastic cards to a minimum.

28. (Currently Amended) Method according to Claim 25,

wherein the pressing out of the plastic cards from the sheet or strip material is carried out by via means of a peeling movement.